

Racing kayaks line up in Mooney Bay in front of the Hogs Back Locks

## Rideau Paddling Guide 17

### Jock River to Hogs Back

*(along the Rideau River)*

Rideau Canal National Historic Site and World Heritage Site, Ontario, Canada

by

**Ken W. Watson**

This is an easy paddling river section of the Rideau River from the Jock River (just north of the Long Island Locks) to the Hogs Back Locks. The map included in this guide can be enlarged (while viewing the PDF) to any level of detail you desire as an aid for travel planning.



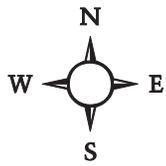
### Water Access

There are several points of water access. At the south end is **Jock River Landing** (45° 15.625'N - 75° 42.480'W), a small park at the mouth of the Jock River, just off Lodge Rd. near the intersection with County Rd. 73 (Prince of Wales Drive). In the middle, there is the ramp in **Eccolands Park** (45° 18.890'N - 75° 41.830'W) on the east side of the river and the **Black Rapids Lock** on the west side of the river. At the north end there is the ramp in **Mooneys Bay Park** (45° 22.190'N - 75° 41.740'W).

### Facilities

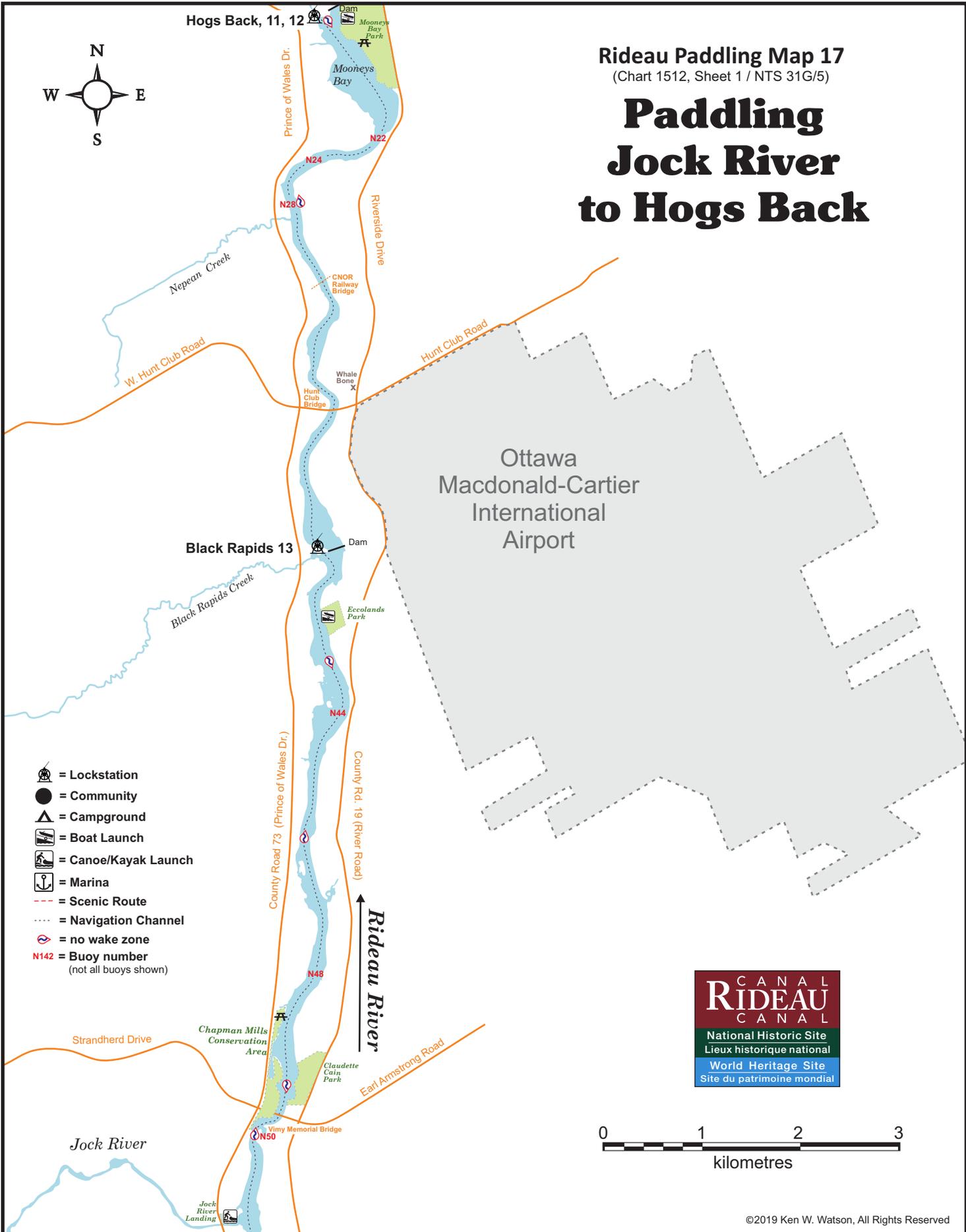
**Lodging:** If you're paddling and camping, the lockstations are a good choice for camp spots (a camping fee applies). Camping is allowed at all lockstations except for Ottawa and Smiths Falls Combined. There are a few B&Bs in the general area, plus a host of accommodations in Ottawa. For information about local accommodations see: [www.ottawatourism.ca](http://www.ottawatourism.ca), [www.rideau-info.com/canal/](http://www.rideau-info.com/canal/), and general lodging sites (i.e. Airbnb, bbcanada, TripAdvisor).

**Supplies:** A local source for supplies is the city of Ottawa (and the many suburbs).



Rideau Paddling Map 17  
(Chart 1512, Sheet 1 / NTS 31G/5)

# Paddling Jock River to Hogs Back



- = Lockstation
- = Community
- = Campground
- = Boat Launch
- = Canoe/Kayak Launch
- = Marina
- = Scenic Route
- = Navigation Channel
- = no wake zone
- = Buoy number  
(not all buoys shown)



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## **Big Boats**

You'll be sharing the Rideau with big power boats (cruisers). The Rideau is generally not a crowded waterway and often you'll find the large boats in "packs" - travelling from lock to lock - once they pass by you won't see any for awhile. Some of these boats can generate a large wave. The general rule for a paddler and large waves is to meet them head on, this can actually be fun in a kayak (not as much fun in a canoe).

The main navigation channel is shown on the map as a blue dashed line - this is where the big boats will be travelling. So, if you wish to avoid these, pick a route away from the navigation channel. Many paddlers prefer paddling near shore, it's more interesting (i.e. wildlife, cottages) and it keeps you farther away from the waves produced by big boats.

There are several "no wake" zones on the Rideau - these have been marked on the maps. Boaters within these areas are supposed to be travelling at a slow enough speed (less than 10 kph) that their boat doesn't generate any potentially damaging or dangerous waves. .

## **Wind**

A question often asked is which way does the wind blow? The prevailing wind, powered by the jet stream, is from the southwest. That's about the only rule of thumb. If a front is moving in then the wind can come from any direction. I've been on several paddles where I've been paddling into the wind on the way out in the morning and into the wind on the way back in the afternoon because the wind swung around 180 degrees (for some reason it never seems to work the other way around - at your back both ways). So, if you're going to travel the entire Rideau, going from Kingston to Ottawa improves the odds of having the wind at your back - but be prepared for anything.

## **Etiquette**

Your trip planning should include a "leave no trace" approach - carry out what you carry in. Many areas are un-serviced (no garbage cans) - so plan to be self-contained. The lockstations provide waste disposal facilities.

## **Preparation & Safety**

Please read the trip planning information on [www.rideau-info.com/canal/paddling/](http://www.rideau-info.com/canal/paddling/). While these lakes are easy paddling, normal paddling preparations should be made (all required safety gear, maps, food, water, first-aid kit, etc.). Zebra mussels are present in many areas along the Rideau, so a pair of water shoes (to avoid cut feet) is recommended.

Please take all normal safety precautions, including checking the weather forecast before you head out and making sure that someone on shore knows your planned travel route and itinerary

## **Navigation**

While the Rideau is generally easy to navigate, taking along a set of maps is a must (in addition to any GPS you might have). Although the map in this guide is an accurate 1:50,000 representation of the

## ***Rideau Paddling Guide 17: Jock River to Hogs Back Locks by Ken W. Watson***

waterway (when printed to 8.5" x 11"), you may also wish to also have the 1:20,000 hydrographic chart for this section (Chart 1512). For power boat navigation, the charts are an absolute must (the map in this guide should not be used for power boat navigation). The charts are also very handy for the paddler, since they show the Rideau in great detail, including depths (which can be helpful when looking for wildlife habitat or just interesting places to paddle).

The charts also show all the navigation buoys. These are all numbered (red buoys have even numbers, green buoys have odd numbers) and so can be used as an aid in locating yourself on the map when you're on open water. A subset of those buoy numbers have been included on the paddling guide maps.

For those wishing to go off the beaten path or want to know more of the topography and geographic features of the surrounding countryside, the 1:50,000 NTS map for this section is 31G/5.

### **Distances:**

Circumference distances are approximate, following the main shorelines. The navigation channel is shown on the map.

- Long Island Locks to Hogs Back Locks = 14.9 km (9.3 mi)
- Jock River Landing to Black Rapids Lock = 7.3 km (4.5 mi)
- Black Rapids Lock to Hogs Back Lock = 6.6 km (4.1 mi))

### **The Locks**

Most Rideau lockstations offer facilities such as washrooms, water, recycling cans, waste cans and picnic tables. Most also allow camping for paddlers travelling the Rideau for a modest camping fee. Paddlers can portage the locks for free, but you owe it to yourself to lock through at least one lock in order to get the full experience of paddling the Rideau Canal. See [www.rideau-info.com/canal/](http://www.rideau-info.com/canal/) for the current fee schedule.

### **The Rideau River**

The Rideau River is generally a slow moving river, the only appreciable currents will be from the outflow of the canal weirs during times of high water. The main hazard are these same weirs, some with overflow dams. These are well marked on the upstream side and paddlers should avoid getting too close to these. Zebra mussels are present. Aquatic vegetation growth is present in most sheltered areas with a depth of less than 10 ft (3 m). Wildlife is abundant - see the Wildlife of the Rideau Canal section.

### **Jock River to Hogs Back**

In the pre-canal era, the river was a few feet lower than it is today, water levels have been raised by the canal dam at Hogs Back (which raised the water by 41 feet / 12.5 m at that location).

Although you're now paddling through an area of high urban development, you'll find a surprising amount of natural shoreline. For instance, the section for 2 km south of Black Rapids is where Ottawa's Greenbelt (an area theoretically to remain undeveloped) crosses the Rideau River. You will also find

several community parks bordering the Rideau. I've only marked a few of these on the map, ones that appear to offer a landing (and leg stretching) opportunity for the paddler.

One cautionary note, the lower Jock River is not recommended for the paddler-- it can have rough water in the spring and the weir a little ways up has dangerous undertows.

## **POINTS OF INTEREST** (listed south to north)

**Jock River:** This 72 km long river was originally known as "River Jacques" (1816). It took on the name "Goodwood River" for a time (1823) and then in 1830 settled on the present name as the Jock River. John Mactaggart speculated in 1827 of making it navigable to Richmond, but no action was ever taken on this idea. The lower Jock River is not recommended for paddlers.

**Jock River Landing:** This is a small municipal park with road access off of Lodge Road. It's also an easy to use put in / pull out spot for canoes and kayaks.

**Vimy Memorial Bridge:** This is a new bridge crossing of the Rideau Canal, opened in July 2014. It is a fixed high level bridge which has a clearance of at least 6.7 m / 22 ft.

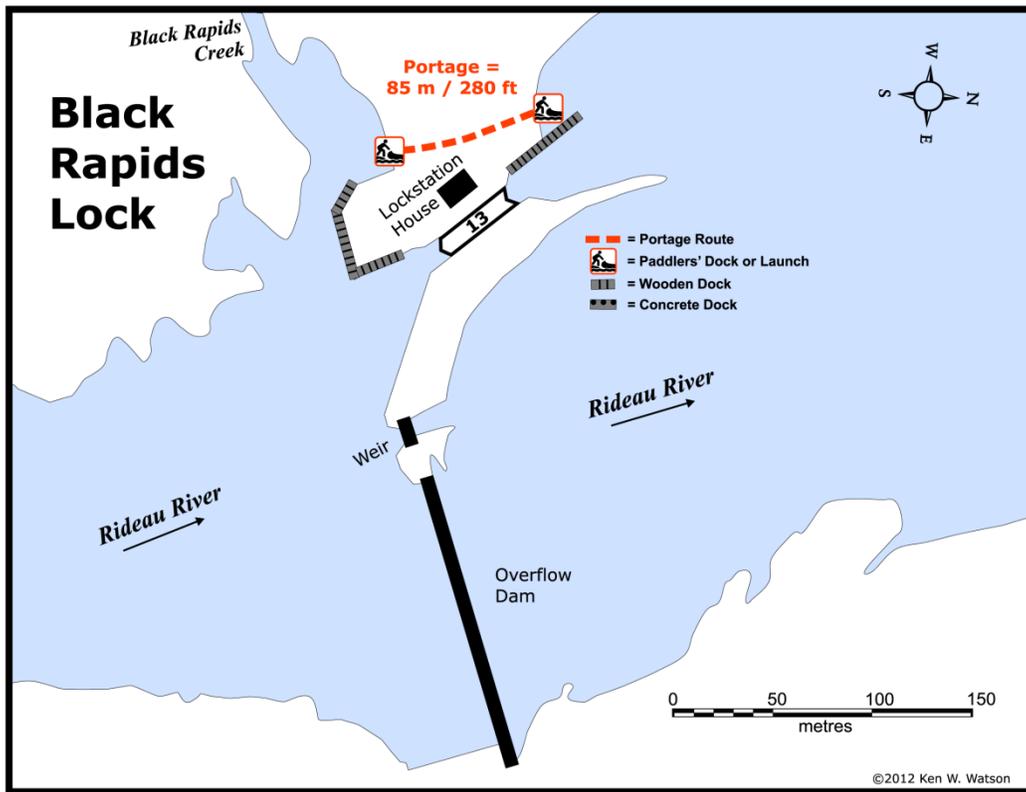
**Chapman Mills Conservation Area:** This conservation area features 1.5 km of walking trails, washrooms and picnic areas.

**Eccolands Park:** This public park is an easy spot to get out and stretch your legs. Part of it is located on the site of the quarry used for the stones to build the lock and dam at Black Rapids (the quarry is not visible today).

**Black Rapids Lock:** This is a single lock with a lift of 9.4 feet (2.8 m). It's one of the most "modernized" locks on the Rideau Canal with almost every feature, including the lock itself, having been rebuilt over the years. The dam was fully rebuilt in 1949-50. The weir was rebuilt in 1925. The lock was rebuilt with concrete blocks in 1928. The original stone lockmaster's house was replaced by a frame house in 1914. The most significant change was the electrification of the lock in 1969.

The original dam in this location was a stone arch dam (an example of this is the dam that presently exists at Nicholsons). However, it was subject to ice and spring flooding damage. Repairs included adding (1841) a timber apron below the dam (to prevent erosion) and then capping (1862) it with a timber flat dam (essentially using the stone dam as a foundation). That was replaced in 1906 and 1909. In 1949-50, the straight concrete dam that you can see today was built just downstream of the original arch dam. Parts of the original arch dam still exist underwater.

The lockstation property is very pretty with nice lawns and large shade trees - it's a good spot to take a break or to camp.



**Ottawa MacDonald-Cartier International Airport:** In the area of Black Rapids you'll likely hear or see airplanes. To the east is the Ottawa Macdonald-Cartier International Airport. It started as a civilian flying field as early as 1919 (Hunt Club Field) and then a more formalized flying club airport (Uplands - named due to the upland plateau it was built on), then was used by the military during WWII (training facility), then became a joint civilian/military facility and finally a full civilian facility.

**Michael J.E. Sheflin (Hunt Club) Bridge:** This is a fixed high level (>16 m / >50 ft) concrete bridge built in 1985. It carries Hunt Club Road across the canal. It was rehabilitated/expanded in 2006.

**Whale Bones:** Just a bit north of the airport (a bit north of Hunt Club Bridge), the 10,420 year old (+/- 150 yrs) bone of a Beluga/White whale (*Delphinapterus leucas*) was found. At that time, this area was under the Champlain Sea, a brackish water sea created by the retreating glaciers (see Geology of the Rideau Canal section).

**CNOR Railway Bridge:** This is a fixed high level (9.5 m / 30.8 ft) railway bridge. The bridge was originally built for the Canadian Northern Ontario Railway in 1913.

**Mooneys Bay:** As you come to the curve of the river at the head of Mooneys Bay, you'll be paddling over the drowned Three Island Rapids, one of two sets of rapids in this area that gave raftsmen (floating timber down the Rideau River) trouble before the canal was built (the second set of rapids was Three Rock Rapids - see Hogs Back).

**Mooneys Bay Park:** A public park with a large public beach, a good spot to stop and have a picnic and/or a swim.

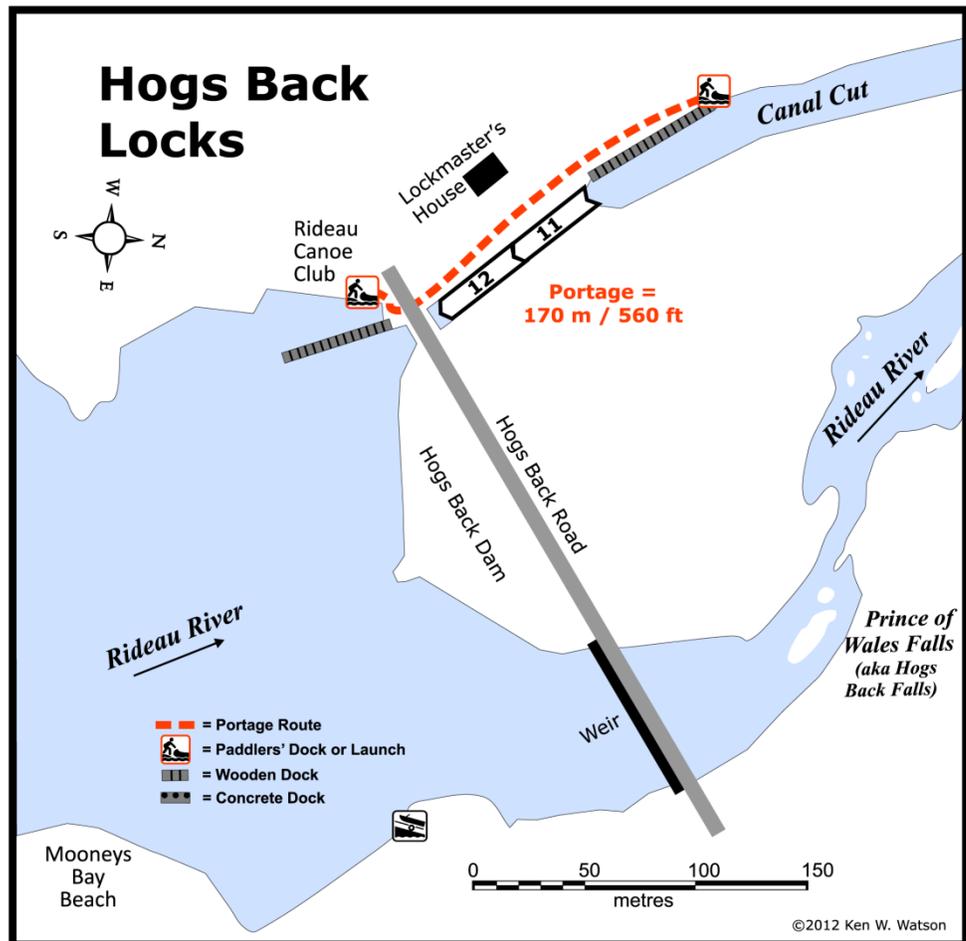
**Rideau Canoe Club:** Just above the locks on the west shore you'll find the Rideau Canoe Club. You may find many other paddlers in this area, generally paddling racing canoes and kayaks. The club was founded in 1902 (as the Rideau Aquatic Club) with an impressive building located on the canal in downtown Ottawa (at the foot of Fifth Avenue, just south of today's Flora Footbridge). It was renamed the Rideau Canoe Club in 1947 and moved to this location in 1948. The current clubhouse was built in 2010.

**Rideau River to Ottawa River:** The Hogs Back Dam marks the end of the Rideau Canal portion of the Rideau River. Water flowing through the weir continues along the original channel of the Rideau River to the twin Rideau Falls, where the river plunges 30 feet (9 m) to the Ottawa River. Passing through the locks at Hogs Back drops you into the artificial cut that leads to the Ottawa Locks.

**Hogs Back Locks:** This is a set of two locks, a lift lock and a guard lock. The guard lock was built as a flood prevention mechanism and normally only the lift lock (northern lock) is used. It has a lift of 13.8 feet (4.2 m).

This area is the most spectacular example of landscape change brought about by the building of the Rideau Canal. This was the spot chosen to have the canal leave the Rideau River, the location known originally as Three Rock Rapids. These rapids had a drop of 6 feet (1.8 m) over a length of 2,000 feet (600 m). According to John Mactaggart (1829) it is "called the Hog's Back, from the circumstance of raftsmen with their wares [timber] sticking on it in coming down the stream" (the rocks sticking up appeared in form of the bony back of a hog).

Lt. Colonel John By decided to build a large dam here in order to flood the river all the way up to the foot of the lock he planned to build at Black Rapids. This big dam would also put a head of water into the canal cut leading to the Ottawa locks. But he had lots of trouble – the dam fell down (washed away) three times during construction and in the end a new engineering technique had to be employed to create the dam that stands to this day (this story is recounted in *Tales of the Rideau*). The dam raised the water by 41 ft (12.5 m) in this location.



The dam itself is difficult to see, it is the section of land between the locks and the weir. Hogs Back Road runs along the top of it. Although it started off as a stone dam which would have been similar to the large dams seen at places such as Long Island Lockstation and Jones Falls Lockstation, it is the stone dam that fell down three times. In the end, timber cribbing filled with broken stone was used to dam the Rideau River. Earthen material forms the apron (front) of the dam and rubble stone the back. You can see a large amount of that rubble stone backing near the weir.

**Hogs Back Falls:** Take a short walk to view the present day falls (technically the “Prince of Wales Falls” but known locally as the “Hogs Back Falls”), located just downstream from the waste water weir. What you’re seeing is not a natural waterfall, it’s the 12.5 m /41 ft of dam-raised water going through a man-made (excavated) channel, heading back to the original level of the Rideau River. If you want to get a sense of what the original Three Rock Rapids looked like, the lower half of those rapids still exist below the dam and present day falls.

The rapids here were formed by several small faults, tilting and fracturing the rock units. The fault disruption of those rock units can be clearly seen today. The rocks are mostly made up of Ottawa Limestone (a quarry in the limestone on the east side of the river was used to obtain the stones used in the locks). You can also see some darker shaly and sandy rocks, part of the older Rockcliffe Formation.

The original rapids didn’t require a portage - natives, surveyors and voyageurs would line their canoes (pull them) up or down the rapids. It does appear that when civilized folk arrived, a portage was developed to allow them to bypass the rapids. There is a tale told of the Billings family (early settlers) accidentally shooting the rapids (c.1814). The problem with the tale is that it has the Billings going over the falls, which didn’t exist until the dam was built. Nonetheless, if you look at the rapids below the falls, you can imagine the poor Billings family shooting through that in a canoe.

## **Geology of the Rideau Canal**

As you paddle the Rideau Canal, the route you follow is defined by its geology. The area is underlain by part of an old mountain range, the Grenville Mountains, eroded down over many millions of years. Much of this eroded mountain range has been covered by younger sedimentary rocks, but portions of the old mountains are exposed, partly a result of their original topography and partially due to the eroding away of younger overlying rocks. This area is known as the Frontenac Axis. In essence, if you paddle from Kingston to Smiths Falls, you’ll be paddling over a (very old) mountain range.

The Frontenac Axis can be thought of as a ridge connecting the extensive area of the Canadian Shield to the north and the Adirondack mountains to the south. On the Rideau, the southern irregular boundary of the Frontenac Axis is near Kingston Mills and the northern irregular boundary is on the northern reaches of Big Rideau Lake. The Frontenac Axis is made up of rocks formed 1.35 to 1.06 billion years ago (Precambrian: middle to late Proterozoic age) and then deformed and metamorphosed 900 million years ago. The rock types that you’ll be able to see as you travel through the Frontenac Axis include granite, syenite, monzonite, migmatite, gabbro, quartzite, marble, gneiss and pegmatite. Many of the lakes are underlain by marble (crystalline limestone) which provides some buffering against acid rain.

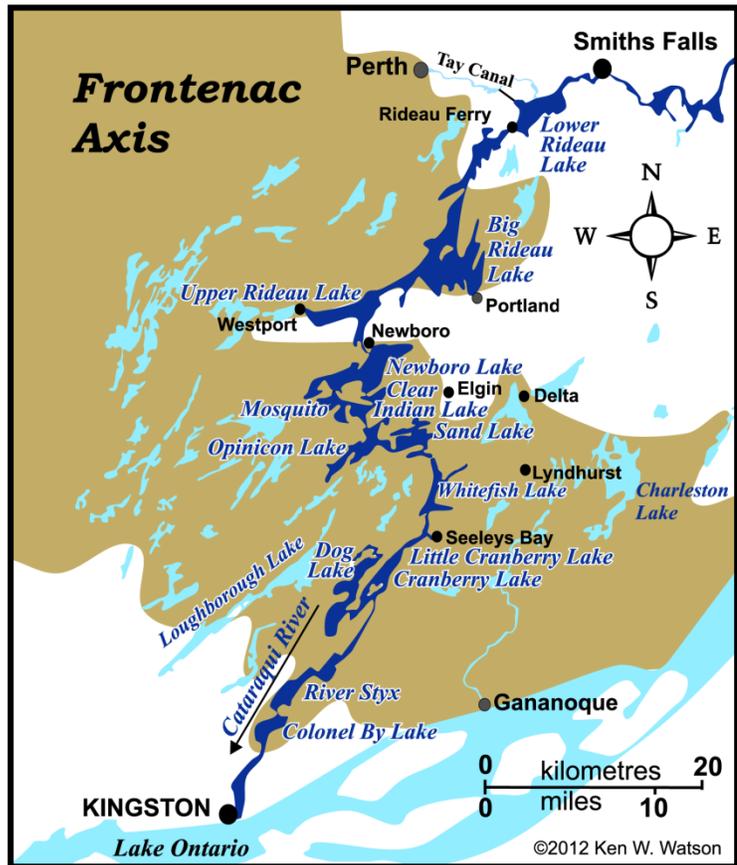
To the north and south of the Frontenac Axis are younger, 520 to 460 million year old (Paleozoic: Cambrian to Lower Ordovician age) rocks including limestone, sandstone, dolomite, shale and conglomerate. Most of these rocks were laid down in a shallow sea that covered this area, which was near the equator at that time (part of Laurentia which eventually became part of North America due to continental drift). The rocks near Kingston are dominated by limestone which provided much of the

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building material for the early town (hence the nickname, Limestone City). In the centre part of the Rideau, on the margin of the Frontenac Axis, the younger sedimentary rocks tend to be dominated by sandstone. Beyond that, from Smiths Falls to Ottawa the rocks are mostly dolomite, limestone and shale.

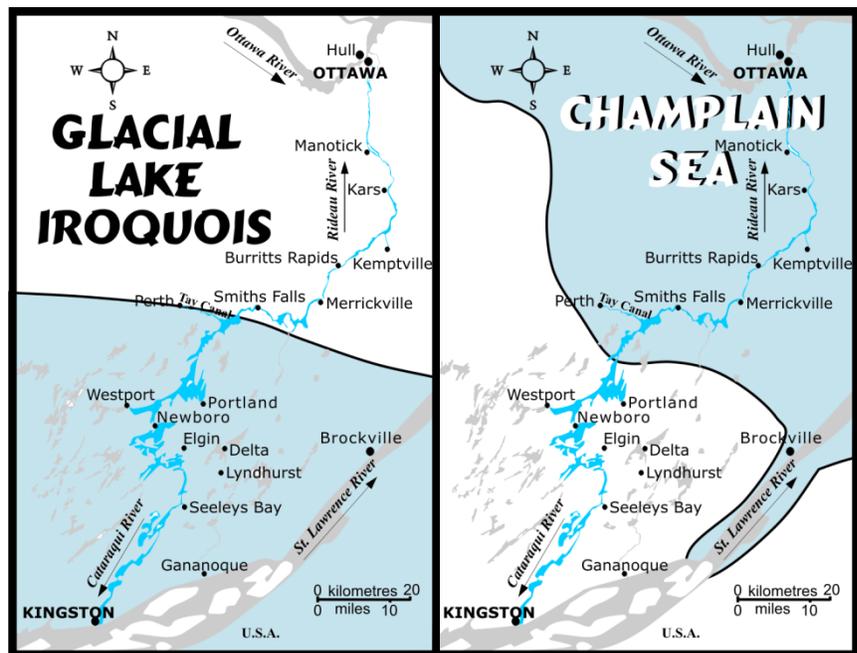
More recently, three events have impacted on the landscape - the ice last age, glacial Lake Iroquois and the Champlain Sea. During the last ice age, which peaked about 20,000 years ago, the Rideau area was covered by ice up to 1.5 kilometres (1.0 mi) thick. The ice polished and moved rocks, excavated some of the landscape and left large deposits of sand and gravel. The weight of the ice depressed the landscape by about 175 m (575 ft) below where it is today.

By 14,000 years ago, the climate began to warm up, melting the glaciers and forcing them to retreat. In the area of Lake Ontario, today's exit of the lake down the St. Lawrence River was blocked by ice and a large lake, about 30 m (100 ft) higher than today's Lake Ontario, formed. That lake, known as Lake Iroquois, extended as far north as Perth and Smiths Falls.



Evidence of that lake exist today in form of glaciolacustrine (a big word for glacial lake) deposits. These include near shore sediments such as gravel and gravelly sand, and deeper water deposits such as silt and clay. These deposits are found all over the southern Rideau, including on heights of land, such as near the top of Rock Dunder. This is because the overall landscape was depressed, and features such as Rock Dunder formed part of the bottom of this large lake.

By about 13,350 years ago a channel opened up in the ice dam (near Rome, NY), rapidly draining much of the lake. At the



**Very generalized representations of glacial Lake Iroquois and the Champlain Sea in the Rideau region.**

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same time the land was rising as the weight of the ice was removed (this rising is called “isostatic rebound”).

As Lake Iroquois and subsequent glacial lakes were getting smaller, the glaciers were continuing their retreat from the St. Lawrence lowlands. About 13,000 years ago this allowed waters from the Atlantic Ocean to mix with glacial melt-waters and river drainage to create a brackish sea known as the Champlain Sea which extended past (west and south) of Ottawa.

The southern limit of this sea on the Rideau Canal was near Nobles Bay of Big Rideau Lake. If you were paddling the sea back then, you would have been enjoying it in the company of whales. The bones of a humpback whale were found near Smiths Falls and beluga (white) whale bones have also been found in Champlain Sea deposits. This sea retreated as the glaciers moved north and the land continued to undergo isostatic rebound. By about 11,100 years ago, the central Rideau had risen above sea level and the land that we see today was being revealed. Rivers and streams continued to modify the landscape up until the building of the Rideau Canal.

There are a some interesting geological features in the Ottawa area. The northern part of the Rideau River is the youngest part of the waterway (outside of canal altered sections) since, in the immediate post-glacial period, the Ottawa River had a channel to the south of where it is today, across much of urban Ottawa to the Mer Bleue area (where the trace of the old Ottawa River channel can be clearly seen). It eventually shifted north (due to isostatic rebound) to its present location and cut a deep channel. The faster excavation by the Ottawa River, through the underlying limestone rocks, compared to the Rideau River, formed Rideau Falls.

Another geological feature at Ottawa is that much of the area is underlain by a thick clay layer, a type of “quick clay” known locally as Leda clay (named after a type of small clam found in the clay deposits). Quick clay is a clay that is not well bonded and is subject to liquefaction, that is, when vibration is induced, it can turn into a liquid and flow. When undisturbed, it looks and acts like a normal solid form of clay. It was formed by glacial silt settling out on the bottom of the Champlain Sea. There it formed a stable type of marine clay, “glued” with salt. When the sea retreated due to the rising land, this clay was exposed to rainfall that removed much of that salt bonding, creating the unstable clay that is present in much of the region today. Earthquakes can cause this clay to liquefy, leading to landslides. Ottawa is a seismically active region (earthquake prone) and, in the future, an earthquake is going to play havoc with the city (if I lived in Ottawa, I’d check to see if my house is sitting on bedrock or on clay).

### **Mining in the Rideau Region**

The rocks of the Frontenac Axis are host to some small mineral deposits, several of which were mined in the mid-late 1800s and in the early 1900s. In the Rideau Canal region, minerals such as apatite (for phosphate), mica, feldspar, graphite and iron were mined. A few of these old mining areas have been noted in the guides.

Some of the earliest mining in the region was for rocks to be used for the dams and locks of the Rideau Canal. Rocks of the Frontenac Axis were not suitable for this purpose (too hard and often fractured) and so quarries to mine rocks for the canal were established in the younger sedimentary rocks, mining sandstone or limestone. You can see the local sedimentary geology reflected in the type of rocks used for the building of the locks and dams along the Rideau; limestone in the southern area, sandstone (Potsdam sandstone) in the central Rideau and dolomitic limestone and limestone in the northern part.

The first mine on/near the Rideau Canal (excluding the small scale iron mining near Lower Beverley Lake in the early 1800s) was the iron mine on Iron Island near Newboro opened by the Chaffey brothers, John, Benjamin and Elswood, in about 1850. Phosphate mining (for fertilizer, most was shipped to England) started in the Rideau area in about 1867 and continued to the early 1890s. By the late 1880s, mica mining was also underway. Apatite (phosphate) and mica form in the same geological environment, so several mines which started off mining phosphate were later mined for mica. Mica mining ended in the 1920s as the value of the mineral fell to uneconomic levels.

Today, mining in the region is mostly surface quarrying for sand, gravel, and stone.

## **Wildlife of the Rideau Canal**

The Rideau spans a wide variety of ecosystems, due in part to the underlying geology and man's activity in the last 200 years. The Frontenac Axis, a section of the Canadian Shield (Precambrian rocks - very old) underlies the Rideau from Kingston Mills to Lower Rideau Lake. These hard rocks form rugged topography (hills, ravines), including the basins for the lakes on the system. Most of the lakes are underlain by crystalline limestone which acts as a buffer against acid rain (hence the lakes are very productive for fish and other aquatic life). Outside of the Frontenac Axis, younger (Palaeozoic) flat lying sedimentary rocks form the underlying bedrock (it is from these rocks that the stones for the dams and locks were quarried).

The area has been actively logged since before the canal was built, the entire area cut over several times. Most of the region (including many of the islands in the lakes) was farmed or used for cattle pasture at one time. By the early 20th century, small farms on poor Frontenac Axis lands were being abandoned in favour of better (more productive) pastures.

So today, along the Rideau you'll find forested areas (some now 100 years mature), active farmland, scrubland and abandoned farmland, low density cottage/summer home developed (rural) land and urban land. The forests are generally mixed, deciduous trees (oak, maple, ash, basswood, birch, elm) and conifer trees (most commonly white pine, white spruce and cedar). On flat lying topography you'll find cedar swamps, hardwood (black ash & silver maple) swamps, and bogs. Along the margins of the Rideau Canal you'll find cattail marshes. All these areas support a varied and healthy wildlife population.

The following is a list of the most common wildlife that you might spot on your Rideau journey. Note that photos of many of these birds and animals can be found on my Rideau website at:

[www.rideau-info.com/canal/ecology/fauna.html](http://www.rideau-info.com/canal/ecology/fauna.html)

### **Water Birds**

**Common Loon** – on all the lakes, this bird is distinctive for its haunting call. It's a diving bird, swimming underwater to catch fish

**Great Blue Heron** – along the entire Rideau, a large bird usually seen wading near shore.

**Green Heron** – most commonly in the shallow water sections (Colonel By Lake, River Styx, Rideau River) this is a small heron. Usually seen perched in a tree.

**Canada Goose** – yes, we have these (more each year)

**Ducks** – most commonly the Mallard duck (quacks when flushed), American Merganser duck (a pointed red bill) and Wood duck (squeaks when flushed).

**Pied-billed Grebe** – In some areas you'll also spot the reclusive Pied-billed Grebe (a small diving bird).

**Ospreys** – now common along the Rideau - often spotted in their large nest made of sticks perched high in a pine tree or a power line stanchion. It dives to catch fish (quite spectacular to see)

**Ring-billed Gull** – a gull with mark on bill

**Terns** – the Common Tern, a large white tern with dark bill and the Black Tern, small tern with black body (adult)

**Trumpeter Swans** – An extirpated native species in this region, they were re-introduced in the 1990s. Favourite haunts include Opinicon Lake and Big Rideau Lake (near Narrows and Portland).

## **Other Birds**

There are many other types of birds that you might spot in the near-water environment; red-tailed hawks, red-winged blackbirds, turkey vultures, turkeys, ruffed grouse and many more (bring along your bird book).

## **Reptiles and Amphibians**

**Turtles:** we've got lots of turtles - most common are the Common Map Turtle (a peaked shell and yellow-orange lines on the skin and shell); Midland Painted Turtle (a flat smooth shell with bright red splotches along the edge) and the Common Snapping Turtle (can get very large, a prehistoric looking turtle). You'll often find Map and Painted turtles sunning themselves on logs and rocks. The Snapping turtle almost always stays in the water, you'll find it floating or slowly swimming near marshy areas. There are also three other less commonly seen turtles, the Stinkpot Turtle (aka Musk Turtle) a small turtle found in areas with aquatic plant growth; Blanding's Turtle with a "war helmet" type shell and bright yellow chin and throat, usually found in wetlands and the Spotted Turtle, a small turtle with bright yellow spots on its shell, usually found in areas with aquatic plants and a silt bottom.

**Frogs:** we have lots of frogs that will provide you with a nightly serenade. The two biggest are the bullfrog and the green frog. Also the leopard frog, spring peeper and many others.

**Snakes:** we do not have any poisonous snakes. The two largest snakes are the Northern Water Snake and the Black Rat Snake – both generally found near water. The common garter snake can also be found throughout the region.

## **Mammals**

In the near shore environment you'll likely spot muskrats and beavers. You may even spot the somewhat reclusive river otter (found in the lakes here as well as rivers). And there are the usual Eastern Ontario mammals to be sometimes found near the water: raccoons, black, grey and red squirrels, chipmunks, foxes, coyotes, white-tailed deer and skunks. Black bears, although quite rare in the region, are present.

## **Fish**

The Rideau is home to healthy populations of many fish species. The lakes and most of the rivers are home to species such as Large Mouth Bass, Small Mouth Bass, Northern Pike and Crappie. Lake Trout are present in some lakes that have depths in excess of 80 ft / 24 m (i.e. Big Rideau Lake). There are Walleye

in some areas (i.e. Upper Rideau Lake and the Rideau River) and Muskellunge (Musky/Maskinonge) in some sections of the Rideau River.

## **Aquatic Plants:**

The Rideau hosts quite a variety of aquatic plants.

**Submerged Plants:** Waterweed (like aquarium plants); Pondweed; Smartweed (holds flower above surface of water); Tape-grass (like underwater grass, flower on coiled stem); Coontail (like a thick furry coon's tail); Water-milfoil (one species an invasive plant).

**Aquatic Plants ( floating):** White Water-lily (white fragrant flower); Bullhead Water-lily (round yellow flower); Frogbit (invasive alien, small floating leaf like water lily); Duckweed (food for ducks, tiny plant)

**Aquatic Plants (emergent):** Cattail (big brown seed heads); Pickerelweed (blue flowers on stalk); Flowering Rush (invasive alien); Arrowhead (arrowhead-pointed leaves, white flowers); Purple Loosestrife (invasive alien, now controlled by beetles in some areas).

Oh - and those amorphous green blobs floating under the water in near-shore areas. They are benign (not due to pollution), a type of filamentous green algae. Their abundance is due to zebra mussels which don't eat this type of algae, but do eat their competition (single-celled algae) – and so, by removing the competition, have allowed these blobs to expand in numbers and length of season.

*My thanks to Simon Lunn and the Rideau Roundtable ([www.rideaoundtable.ca](http://www.rideaoundtable.ca)) for assistance with the wildlife and aquatic plants information.*

Those interested in some tips for taking good photos of wildlife should view “The Nature of Wildlife Photography” on my website at: [www.rideau-info.com/canal/ecology/nature-photography.html](http://www.rideau-info.com/canal/ecology/nature-photography.html)

One photography hint, a very simple one, is to choose a paddling route that puts the sun to your back for most of the day. Try to choose a route that has you on a west shore in the morning, a north shore at mid-day and an east shore in the afternoon. For those doing the entire Rideau, this means going from Kingston to Ottawa rather than the other way around. This will put the wildlife that you see on your paddle in the best light.

## **Errors**

If you find any errors or omissions in this guide, please let me know ([rideauken@gmail.com](mailto:rideauken@gmail.com)) and I'll get them fixed.

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